

## **The Kampwerth Farm**

Brendan Kampwerth  
All Saints Academy, Breese  
Teacher: Stephanie Garcia

Between 1871 and 1883 Henry Bernard Kampwerth immigrated from Germany with his three brothers and a sister and moved to parts of Clinton County, Illinois. In 1915 at the age of fifty Henry, my great, great grandfather, bought a 120-acre farm north of Beckemeyer, Illinois, from August Beckemeyer. This was the beginning of the Kampwerth Farm.

In the early years of the farm, corn, oats, wheat, and potatoes were produced. My great great grandfather also raised chickens, pigs, and cows. He sold the eggs and after butchering the pigs sold the lard. On the average, there were about 100 eggs produced each day. The price of the eggs varied from thirteen to twenty-six cents per dozen.

In the early years, farming was very labor intensive due to the lack of modern machinery. However, with the help of Dan, Nell, Lucy, Flora, Babe and Dolly, the six horses owned by the Kampwerths, the fields got plowed and helped produce the crops on the 120 acres.

In 1926 the family built its barn. It housed horses, cows, and what little equipment my great, great grandfather owned. Logs for the barn were cut southeast of Bartelso, Illinois, and brought to the saw mill in Bartelso and eventually to the Kampwerth farm in a large steel-wheeled wagon. That wagon still exists on the farm today.

By 1931 my great great grandfather acquired ten milking cows. The milking was done by hand and the milk sold at eighty-eight cents a gallon to individuals in the area. At

times the price dropped to twenty-five cents a gallon. The Kampwerth Farm did not have a delivery service, but neighbors stopped by the farm to purchase their milk.

Henry paid his eight children \$30 a month (about \$1.00 a day) to work on the farm. Herman Kampwerth a distant cousin also worked on the Kampwerth Farm until he was drafted by the army to fight in North Africa, during World War II. He was killed in action in 1943. Today, you can see his name posted on the Holthaus-Kampwerth American Legion Post in Beckemeyer, Illinois. My great great grandfather, Henry received a letter from Herman days after he had actually been killed. Great Uncle Jerome said that my Great Aunt Margie Scott, his sister, still has Herman's letter packed away in my great grandma's, Marie Kampwerth's, belongings.

By 1938, farms in the area began receiving electricity. The Kampwerth farm was only one of the many farms that benefitted. Rural Electric Association (REA) in Breese, Illinois was the source of the electricity and today is still the provider of electricity for the rural areas. Another stepping stone was the purchase of the farm's first tractor in the 1940s during World War II. The tractor came in handy for the additional fifty acres that was purchased from Julius Trapp in 1943.

My great grandfather, Alphonse Kampwerth, bought the farm from his father's estate in 1944. It included slightly rolling acreage, with about twenty acres for pasture. That same twenty acres is still kept for pasture today.

Fourteen years later, in May 1956 a milking parlor was built for the cows. The parlor was built from the scavenged cement of a Baltimore and Ohio train that derailed from a bearing failure near the Kampwerth farm.

In 1968, Jerome Kampwerth, my great uncle began buying the equipment on the farm and actually took over the farm in 1973. Dairying on the farm ended in 1975. Although the farm still produces grain, corn, soybeans, which replaced the oats of years ago, and wheat, the majority of the farm is used to produce alfalfa hay, which is baled and later sold.

The Kampwerths have constantly replenished the land and remodeled the buildings. This farm was one of the first around the area to add lime to the soil for better fertilization. Presently, lime, nitrogen, and manure are used.

In 1992 the original barn on the farm was destroyed by an electrical fire. The fire destroyed about 8,000 bales of straw and damaged some machinery. In fact, our hometown paper, the *Breese Journal*, reported this event on the front page.

Today, the farm is much like other farms in Illinois continuing to produce grain, corn, soybeans, and wheat, trying to make a profit. The farmers in Illinois depend so much on the weather. You often hear the people of Clinton County say, “The farmers sure could use some rain.”

When I spoke to my great Uncle Jerome, he told me, “I no longer live on the farm, but continue to run the farm. My son, Keith, and his family now live there and my grandson, Kyle, is the fifth generation of Kampwerths to live on the farm.”

My great great grandfather, Henry Kampwerth, would be so proud of his farm today. The Kampwerth Farm will always be a part of our family and Illinois history. [From Abstract and Title Book, Feb. 1973; “Kampwerth Farm Account Book,” 1931; “Fire Destroys Bales, 8000 Bales,” The Breese Journal, Sept. 10, 1992; student historian’s interview with Jerome Kampwerth, Dec. 31, 2005; student historian’s interview with Raymond

Kampwerth, Jan. 2, 2006; “Shoot for top-quality alfalfa hay,” Prairie Farmer, June 4, 1991; “This Farm Belongs to Alphonse Kampwerth,” Carlyle Union Banner, Mar. 1950; and We Were Kampwerth’s. May 1988.]